



ANTHRAX

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is anthrax?

People can get become infected with anthrax in three different ways: by inhaling the bacteria's spores, by eating contaminated meat from an infected animal, and by contracting spores or bacteria through the skin. The most common form of human anthrax is the skin form (cutaneous anthrax). Inhalational and gastro-intestinal anthrax are the more serious forms.

What should I do if I think I have anthrax?

Seek medical attention immediately. People with inhalational anthrax will have flu-like symptoms that will progress rapidly to difficulty breathing. Cutaneous anthrax will start out as a bump on the skin that will turn into a fluid-filled blister. The center will eventually turn black. Gastro-intestinal anthrax can cause severe diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal cramping.

Can I get anthrax from my livestock?

Yes, although the risk is low. The most common form of anthrax people get from animals is cutaneous anthrax. The risk of inhalational or gastro-intestinal anthrax is much lower

My livestock have anthrax. Do I need to take antibiotics or be vaccinated?

There are no recommendations that farmers, ranchers or others who work with anthrax-infected livestock in the United States be vaccinated or treated with antibiotics to prevent the disease. If you helped with a postmortem exam or had significant exposure to body fluids or tissues from an infected animal, you may want to consult with your physician.

How do I protect myself when working with sick livestock and carcasses?

People who work with sick livestock or carcasses should wear rubber boots, gloves, long pants and long-sleeved shirts. After working with livestock, wash your hands and any exposed skin with soap under running water.

What should I do if I have stuck myself with a needle used to vaccinate livestock against anthrax?

The vaccine used for cattle contains live bacteria that has no outer coating and is therefore unlikely to cause human disease. You should clean the wound and consult with your physician.

I am concerned about soil and surface water in areas where cattle died. Are these areas dangerous?

Because areas where livestock have died and are decomposing may contain spores, people should follow the same precautions as mentioned above. Although surface water poses a much smaller risk, avoid using stock dams or dugouts for recreational use if carcasses have been in the water. Waterborne anthrax has not been reported in North Dakota.